United Nations A/54/760

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 February 2000
English
Original: French

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 105
Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

Letter dated 18 February 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the Declaration on the Economic and Social Agenda for Africa at the Dawn of the Third Millennium, adopted at the Summit of African Heads of State and Government held on 18 and 19 January 2000 in Libreville (see annex).

I should be most grateful if you would have this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 105.

(*Signed*) Denis **Dangue Réwaka**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Libreville Declaration on the Economic and Social Agenda for Africa at the Dawn of the Third Millennium, adopted at the conclusion of the Summit of African Heads of State and Government held on 18 and 19 January 2000

1. At the invitation of the President of the Gabonese Republic, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, the Heads of State and Government of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa met in Libreville on 18 and 19 January 2000 for an economic summit,* with a view to deliberating on an agenda for Africa at the dawn of the new millennium and on the challenges of accelerating economic growth and eliminating poverty. On this occasion, they discussed Africa's economic and social progress over the past few years as well as their vision of Africa's future, and underscored their determination to address resolutely the impediments to social and economic progress and bring about a visible reduction of poverty. They also conferred on ways of strengthening sub-Saharan Africa's partnership with its multilateral and bilateral development partners.

2. The Heads of State and Government noted the fact that the region is lagging behind the rest of the world in improving living standards. They were also concerned by Africa's negative image, linked to conflict, pandemics, and poor economic and social performance. Moreover, Africa's integration into the world economy has been slow.

3. The Heads of State and Government underscored that, despite the recent economic recovery in many countries, much more needed to be done to reduce poverty. Unemployment remains at a distressingly high level, particularly among Africa's youth; illiteracy continues to be high; and progress in combating many endemic diseases has been slow. In particular, the summit participants deeply regretted the spread of AIDS and malaria and their devastating impact on the continent.

4. The Heads of State and Government recognized the strong synergy between sound macroeconomic policies and market-friendly structural reforms, on the one hand, and policies that benefit the poor directly, on the other hand. They agreed that the reduction of poverty is not possible in the absence of economic growth.

5. The Heads of State and Government pledged to redouble their efforts to promote strong and lasting growth and poverty reduction through, in particular, the elimination of unproductive expenditure, improvements in education, health, social services, and basic infrastructure. They reaffirmed their resolve to reduce poverty by half by 2015, in keeping with the commitments agreed to in Copenhagen. They pledged to establish a committee to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by this conference.

6. The Heads of State and Government stressed the need to use available resources as effectively and efficiently as possible, in order to promote and accelerate social development. Moreover, they affirmed their determination to fight corruption, and pledged to continue the reform of the judiciary, strengthen the effectiveness of public institutions, and promote administrative and territorial decentralization. They also recognized the importance of reforming civil services in order to increase efficiency.

7. In recognition of the crucial role that trade plays in economic development, the Heads of State and Government called on industrial countries to gradually eliminate agricultural subsidies and open their markets to African products, particularly agricultural goods and textiles. The leaders also reiterated their resolve to accelerate the subregional and regional integration process already under way.

8. The Heads of State and Government underscored the importance of deep structural reforms in transforming the private sector into the engine of growth. They firmly hoped that the sustained implementation of reforms would help create the conditions that would attract the necessary concessional foreign assistance, as well as inflows of foreign direct investment.

* See attached list of participants.

9. Regarding the devastating impact that the AIDS epidemic has had on the social and economic fabric of many countries in Africa, the Heads of State and Government undertook to take all necessary steps to raise public awareness of the problem and to slow the spread of the disease, drawing on the successful experiences of other countries. To this end, they appealed to the international community to provide more assistance in supporting these efforts actively.

10. The Heads of State and Government underscored the importance of stepping up efforts to build peace and to establish regional conflict resolution and crisis prevention mechanisms, which would need, however, the firm support of the international community.

11. The Heads of State and Government welcomed the interest accorded by the international community to poverty reduction and its full integration into macroeconomic and structural reform programmes. They endorsed the new framework for IMF and World Bank concessional lending policies, particularly the introduction of country-owned Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the transformation of the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility into the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. The new framework should signal a new approach for cooperation among the recipient countries, multilateral institutions, and other donors. This should also include assistance in building up the necessary administrative and institutional capacity to formulate and implement poverty reduction policies. However, the Heads of State and Government requested that this new approach should not result in additional conditionality. They further underscored that the planned timing of structural reforms would have to take into account the requirements of the consultative process and the impact of external and internal shocks so as to avoid the interruption of programmes.

12. The Heads of State and Government agreed on the need for consultation between Government and civil society in order to increase the public's understanding and ownership of its country's strategy. However, this consultative process should take cultural factors and customs in the countries concerned into account, and should not constitute a political conditionality.

13. The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed the need to devote particular attention to the role of women in the development process.

14. In discussing the role of external assistance, the Heads of State and Government called for a new partnership with donors based on improved aid coordination, harmonized donor procedures, and firm, longer-term commitments. To this end, they called for the elimination of the multiplicity of donor conditionalities, as well as cross-conditionality, and urged that external assistance be based on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers to support efficient public expenditure programmes geared to achieving poverty reduction within a sustainable medium-term fiscal framework.

15. The Heads of State and Government renewed their solemn appeal to the international community for the cancellation of Africa's debt. They appreciated the impetus given by the Cologne Summit, and saluted the recent strengthening of the Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC Initiative). They called on their development partners to reduce substantially the time required for access to debt relief and to fully finance the HIPC Initiative. The Heads of State and Government also stressed the importance of finding innovative solutions for the heavily-indebted middle-income countries where social indicators are weak, as well as small island or landlocked economies whose potential is handicapped by their debt burden.

16. The Heads of State and Government stressed the importance of the link between the HIPC Initiative and poverty reduction strategies; they pledged to apply the resources made available by debt relief to poverty reduction programmes. They urged donors to provide additional resources so as to contribute to the success of these strategies. They also asked the international community to provide sufficient financial assistance to conflict or post-conflict countries, particularly those in a situation of arrears to multilateral institutions. Special assistance should also be provided to neighbouring countries affected by such conflicts.

17. In conclusion, the Heads of State and Government recognized that poverty reduction is a challenge which they must address themselves. They therefore expressed their determination to move ahead in confronting this challenge head on, with the support of their development partners. They noted that Africa is a continent of great untapped potential, and their aim at the dawn of the new millennium was to realize fully this potential and to translate it into sustained and broad-based development.

18. The Heads of State and Government paid high homage to Mr. Michael Camdessus, a great friend of Africa who has never yielded to Afro-pessimism, for his unwavering fight for African debt relief and poverty reduction.

19. The Heads of State and Government thanked His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, President of the Gabonese Republic and Head of State, for having agreed to assume the chairmanship of the Committee to monitor the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations of this conference. In addition, they expressed their profound gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, President of the Gabonese Republic and Head of State, and to the Gabonese people, for hosting this momentous Summit at the dawn of the new millennium, and for the warm and fraternal hospitality extended to all the delegations.

List of participants

Country	Head of State or Representative	
Angola	*Joaquim da Costa David*	*Minister of Finance*
Benin	*Bruno Amoussou*	*Minister of State in charge of Governmental Coordination*
Botswana	*Festus G. Mogae*	*President*
Burkina Faso	*Blaise Compaoré*	*President*
Burundi	*Mathias Sinamenye*	*Vice President*
Cameroon	*Paul Biya*	*President*
Cape Verde	*António Mascarenhas Gomes Monteiro*	*President*
Central African Republic	*Ange-Félix Patassé*	*President*
Chad	*Idriss Déby*	*President*
Comoros	*Colonel Assoumani Azali*	*President*
Congo, Republic of	*Denis Sassou Nguesso*	*President*
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	*Laurent Désiré Kabila*	*President*
Côte d'Ivoire	*Seydou Diarra*	*Minister of State for Planning and Government Coordination*
Djibouti	*Yacin Elmi Bouh*	*Minister of Economy, Finance and Planning in Charge of Privatization*
Equatorial Guinea	*Angel Serafin Seriche Dougan*	*Prime Minister*

Country	Head of State or Representative	
Eritrea	*Woldai Futur*	*Economic Advisor to the Government*
Ethiopia	*Meles Zenawi*	*Prime Minister*
Gabon	*El Hadj Omar Bongo*	*President*
The Gambia	*Mrs. Aisatou N'Jie-Saidy*	*Vice President and Secretary of State for Health, Social Welfare, and Women's Affairs*
Ghana	*John Evans Atta Mills*	*Vice President*
Guinea	*Ibrahima Kassory Fofana*	*Minister of Economy and Finance*
Guinea-Bissau	*Francisco José Fadul*	*Prime Minister*
Kenya	*Daniel Toroitich arap Moi*	*President*
Lesotho	*Pakalitha B. Mosisili*	*Prime Minister*
Liberia	*M. Nathaniel Barnes*	*Minister of Finance*
Madagascar	*Jocelyn Rafidinarivo*	*General Director, Ministry of Budget and Development of Autonomous Provinces*
Malawi	*Bakili Muluzi*	*President*
Mali	*Alpha Oumar Konaré*	*President*
Mauritania	*Sidi Mohamed Ould Boubacar*	*Minister Secretary General of Presidency*
Mauritius	*Dr. Vasant Kumar Bunwaree*	*Ministry of Finance*
Mozambique	*Alvaro Manuel O'da Silva*	*Ambassador in Brussels*
Namibia	*Nangolo Mbumba*	*Minister of Finance*

Country	Head of State or Representative	
Niger	*Mamadou Tandja*	*President*
Nigeria	*Prof. Jerry Gana*	*Minister of Cooperation and Integration in Africa*
Rwanda	*Donald Kaberuka*	*Minister of Finance*
São Tomé and Príncipe	*Miguel Anjos da Cunha Lisboa Trovoada*	*President*
Senegal	*Abdou Diouf*	*President*
Sierra Leone	*Mme Kadi A. Sesay*	*Minister of Economic Development*
South Africa	*Ms. H.E. Monaisa*	*Ambassador in Gabon*
Sudan	*Abdel-Wahab Osman*	*Minister of Finance*
Swaziland	*Dr. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini*	*Prime Minister*
Tanzania	*Benjamin William Mkapa*	*President*
Togo	*Gnassingbé Eyadéma*	*President*
Uganda	*Speziosa Wandira Kazibwe*	*Vice President*
Zambia	*Frederick J.T. Chiluba*	*President*
Zimbabwe	*Simon Vengayi Muzenda*	*Vice Presidemt*

Regional and International Organizations	Representative	
African Development Bank (ADB)	*Omar Kabbaj*	*President*
Central Bank of Central African States	*Pascal I. Koupaki*	*Director*
Central Bank of Central African States	*Jean-Félix Mamalépot*	*Governor*

Regional and International Organizations	Representative	
Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC)	*Jean Nkuété*	*General Secretary*
International Monetary Fund	*Michel Camdessus*	*Managing Director*
Organization of African Unity	*Salim Ahmed Salim*	*Secretary General*
West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)	*Moussa Touré*	*President*
UNESCO	*Mr. Gassama*	*Resident Representative in Gabon*
UNDP	*Toon Vissers*	*Resident Representative in Gabon*
West African Development Bank	*Boni Yayi*	*President*
World Bank	*Jean-Louis Sarbib*	*Vice President*
World Trade Organization	*Ablassé Ouédraogo*	*Deputy General Director*